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SUBJECT: Ambassador's Call on Minister for Refugee Issues

Ref: Zagreb 1055

Sensitive but Unclassified; please handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador paid his initial courtesy call on Bozidar Kalmeta, Minister for Sea, Transport, Tourism and Development on September 19.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador raised the GOC's newly-approved housing program for former tenancy rights holders outside war-affected areas (reftel). At the meeting, Ambassador congratulated Kalmeta on adoption of the program, which provides for construction of apartments in major cities. He requested clarification of the purchase and lease options, as the written government decision and subsequent GOC statements were vague on whether both options still existed. Kalmeta indicated that former tenancy rights holders would only be allowed to lease these apartments in the future, not to purchase. Ambassador urged Kalmeta and the GOC to consider the purchase option, as the lack of clarification has raised the concern of the international community. This is a difficult decision, Ambassador acknowledged, with both humanitarian and political implications.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: Kalmeta did not appear fully briefed on the housing program prior to the meeting. Ambassador will raise this issue with Kalmeta once again during the September refugee meeting which includes the OSCE, UNHCR, and EU principals. Also, MFA State Secretary Hido Biscevic is preparing a written interpretation of the GOC decision in order to clarify this point in particular. Post will keep Department informed. END COMMENT.
BRADTKE